

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT A 00150 132114Z
ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3794

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 0150

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, HA
SUBJECT: CHRISTMAS AMNESTY OF HAITIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS

REF: STATE 005578

1. EMBASSY HAS CAREFULLY EXAMINED AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ALLEGATIONS REFTEL IN CONNECTION WITH OUR OWN ANALYSIS OF CHRISTMAS AMNESTY. WE HAVE CONCLUDED THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ALLEGATIONS REPRESENT SHOTGUN ASSESSMENT AND ARE ONLY PARTIALLY BASED ON FACT.

2. THE GOH CATEGORIZED 90 OF THE 164 PRISONERS RELEASED IN THE RECENT CHRISTMAS AMNESTY AS HAVING BEEN POLITICAL PRISONERS, ALTHOUGH IT SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED ONLY SIX OF THE ALLEGED GROUP BY NAME. NAME CHECKS OF EMBASSY FILES AND CONVERSATIONS WITH VARIOUS SOURCES INCLUDING RELEASED PRISONERS, HOWEVER, HAVE ENABLED US TO POSITIVELY IDENTIFY 44 POLITICAL PRISONERS FROM THE COMPLETE LIST OF PERSONS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN FREED. WE ARE CONTINUING TO CROSSCHECK THE LIST.

3. RELATIVELY FEW "BIG NAMES" CAPABLE OF POSING A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE DUVALIER GOVERNMENT APPEAR ON THE LIST OF RELEASED PRISONERS, INCLUDING THE EIGHT PERSONS IMMEDIATELY DEPORTED TO FRANCE. HOWEVER, THE RELEASE OF MOST OF THESE PROMINENT POLITICAL PRISONERS HAS BEEN CONFIRMED. A MAJORITY OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS SO
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PORT A 00150 132114Z

FAR IDENTIFIED WAS HELD IN THE NOTORIOUS FT. DIMANCHE AND A DISCUSSION WITH ONE SUCH PRISONER REVEALED THT INDEED THERE WERE ONLY 30 PEOPLE RELEASED IN HIS GROUP ON 12/24/76. THAT DOES NOT RULE OUT OTHER RELEASES OF LESS WELL KNOWN PRISONERS -- INCLUDING PEASANTS ACCUSED OF SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY -- DURING THE SAME TIME PERIOD BUT AS IS APPARENT IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO VERIFY ALL

DETAILS OF THE RELEASES.

4. REPORTS FROM RECENTLY RELEASED POLITICAL PRISONERS INDICATES THAT THE MORTALITY RATE AMONG INMATES AT FT. DIMANCHE IS ALARMINGLY HIGH. HOWEVER, OF THE PRISONERS RUMORED TO HAVE DIED OVER THE PAST YEAR, ONLY ONE APPEARS AMONG THE NAMES OF PRISONERS RELEASED 12/24/76. WE WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS TO VERIFY WHETHER THIS PRISONER DIED OR WAS IN FACT RELEASED.

5. EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO CONFIRM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S ALLEGATIONS THAT SOME OF THE PRISONERS REPORTEDLY RELEASED 12/24/76 HAD IN FACT BEEN RELEASED PREVIOUS TO THAT DATE OR HAD DIED IN PRISON. WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT SUCH A SCHEME COULD BE CARRIED OUT, WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS MORE LIKELY THE GOH INFLATED THE REPORTED NUMBER OF RELEASED POLITICAL PRISONERS BY USING A VERY LOOSE DEFINITION OF THE TERM.

6. A COMPLETE LIST OF PRISONERS RELEASED IN THE CHRISTMAS AMNESTY IS BEING AIRPOUCHED TO THE DEPARTMENT THIS WEEK WITH NOTATIONS OF THOSE PERSONS WE HAVE IDENTIFIED AS POLITICAL PRISONERS. DEPARTMENT WILL BE INFORMED IF WE UNCOVER ANY SIGNIFICANT NEW INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CHRISTMAS AMNESTY.
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